



Third Party Return of Voted Ballots

California law has changed to permit anyone to return anyone else's ballot

How it Works

Californians who cast vote-by-mail ballots can now have anyone return their voted ballots once they place their voted ballot inside the ballot envelope, and seal and sign the envelope.

California lawmakers enacted a law (AB 1921, authored by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego) that removes restrictions on who can return vote-by-mail ballots on behalf of others.

Under the previous rules, only members of a voter's immediate family or household could return a completed vote-by-mail ballot for them. Under the new rules, there are no restrictions on who can return ballots for others.

A person designated to return a vote by mail ballot is subject to punishment under state law if they knowingly and willingly engage in criminal acts related to that ballot. Additionally, state law prohibits a person from receiving compensation for returning ballots on someone's behalf.

What Voters Need to Know

1. You have the right to cast a secret ballot and do not have to tell anyone how you voted
2. You should only give your ballot to someone else to turn in if you trust that person
3. You have the right to refuse a request from anyone to turn in your voted ballot

If you have someone else return your ballot envelope, remember to ask that person to print and sign their name on the return section of your envelope. They must also describe their relationship to you.

In 2017, some campaigns sent representatives door-to-door asking voters to give them their voted ballots to turn in on their behalf. Some voters objected to these tactics and filed complaints with election officials. Remember you have the right to refuse anyone offering to collect your ballot.

Check with your county's elections office to find the ballot return locations available in your area.

Find your county elections office contact information here:

<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices/>

*** This is an excerpt from the 2018 Election Reform Primer: What Voters Need to Know. The full document is available at <http://futureofcaelections.org/electionprimer2018/>.**